

2005

Aid for Towns in the 5th Senate District

A very important part of my job representing the people of the 5th state Senate District is ensuring Bloomfield, Burlington, Farmington and West Hartford receive their fair share of state funding. I am pleased to report the following grants and reimbursements from the state:

Total Education Grants	\$20,390,918	This funding represents an increase of \$1,766,258 over last year's total
Town Aid Road Fund (TAR)	\$786,856	
Mashantucket Pequot/Mohegan Grants	\$1,251,639	
Local Capital Improvements (LoCIP)	\$776,660	
Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)	\$4,977,744	
Totals	\$28,183,817	

FOR SENIORS & VETERANS

Transportation for Seniors

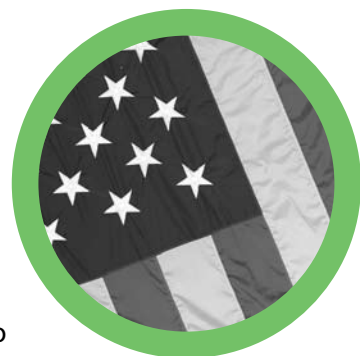
Many senior citizens decide to stop driving but still need to get to stores, appointments and social events. Mobility is necessary for them to remain in their homes and communities, and to maintain independence and dignity. Last session, I was proud to spearhead legislation that will help create regional transportation systems in which volunteers and paid drivers will use their own vehicles to transport the elderly throughout the region. Once up and running, these programs should be self-sustaining and not add to state or local budgets. Also, the legislature provided \$5 million in state funds for each of the next two years to help fund Dial-a-Ride for our elderly and disabled residents.

Protecting Seniors in Annuity Transactions

Many seniors depend on income from annuities as part of their retirement planning. However, some of the terms and conditions of these financial products are complex and confusing, and we want to protect seniors from those who may take advantage of them. The legislature enacted a law requiring the state Insurance Commissioner to adopt regulations establishing standards for the purchase of these products, and procedures for making annuity sales or exchange recommendations.

Honoring Those Who Serve: Military Assistance Package

The legislature passed a Military Assistance Package this year that will create, expand and extend more benefits to our state veterans. This package includes: death benefits for surviving family members of Connecticut-based active duty servicemen and servicewomen; a toll-free phone number for veterans to call about benefits to which they may be entitled; a Military Family Relief Fund to help military families who are struggling while a loved one is away; and a small stipend to families of deployed members of the National Guard.



a message to my constituents

Dear Neighbor,

Recent events remind us how important government can be in the lives of people. As we help our fellow Americans in the South continue to put their lives back together following the catastrophes of Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma, it has become clear that the lasting legacy of these storms will be an understanding that government is more than a mere bureaucracy. All of us, elected officials in particular, must aspire to create effective programs that promote mutual responsibility, serve people in times of need and do not overburden taxpayers.

Tragedies aren't always caused by Mother Nature. Too many small businesses are forced into bankruptcy because of high health insurance costs. Too many seniors struggle to afford ever-increasing prescription costs and often go without. Too many schools are overburdened by increasing numbers of students. The good news is these events are manageable and, as a state official, I can help to ensure that residents are prepared to face these troubles if they occur.

I have prepared this mailing to inform you of some improvements we have already enacted and to ask for your help in setting our priorities for the future. I hope that you and your family enjoy the coming holiday season.

Sincerely,


Jonathan A. Harris
State Senator, 5th District

State Senator
Jonathan Harris

Legislative Office Building, Room 2100, Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Capitol Phone 860-240-0558

E-mail Harris@senatedems.ct.gov

Web www.senatedems.ct.gov/Harris.html

I'm proud to represent the 5th state Senate District which includes the communities of West Hartford, Bloomfield, Burlington and Farmington

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
HARTFORD CT
PERMIT NO. 3937



What do you think?

I am already hard at work preparing for the next legislative session that begins in February. As part of this effort, I have included this short survey on three important issues likely to face the General Assembly. This survey will allow me to quickly register residents' priorities and learn if a broad consensus exists in our district. This survey is also available for you to fill out on my Web page (see address below). You are always welcome to write to me with more detailed responses or thoughts on these and other issues.

Local school systems are struggling to fund new requirements imposed by the federal No Child Left Behind law. What should our state do to address the unfunded No Child Left Behind mandate?

- ☐ Sue the federal government for more funding and more flexibility
- ☐ Leave local school districts to decide how to cover the unfunded costs
- ☐ Raise taxes to help local districts pay for its costs
- ☐ Cut other governmental programs to increase funding for its implementation

We acted to address the state's recent budget shortfall and, as a result, it is possible our state will end this fiscal year with a surplus. If our state realizes a surplus in the coming fiscal year (FY06), what would you suggest we do with it?

- ☐ Invest more in education
- ☐ Make health insurance affordable for more residents
- ☐ Put surplus in state's Rainy Day Fund
- ☐ Provide more local property tax relief
- ☐ Provide emergency assistance to residents for home heating costs

Previously, the state legislature reduced the gas tax by 7 cents. What should be the future role of the state and federal governments in keeping gasoline and oil prices down?

- ☐ The federal government should be responsible for lower prices
- ☐ No role, state tax changes will not affect prices at the pump
- ☐ The state has a definite role, such as lowering the gas tax
- ☐ The state should provide greater incentives for energy conservation

Please trim off the survey portion of this newsletter, fold it in thirds, staple or tape it closed, and affix a 37¢ stamp before mailing back to me. This survey is also online at www.senatedems.ct.gov/Harris.html (click on the survey link). Many thanks in advance for taking the time to share your opinions.

State Senator Jonathan Harris
Room 2100
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

PLACE
37¢
STAMP
HERE



SENATOR JONATHAN HARRIS

Reforming the Ethics Commission

Our state continues to respond to the unprecedented events of last year, which were punctuated by the resignation of our former governor. This year, the General Assembly improved oversight of ethical conduct by establishing an independent Citizens' Ethics Advisory Board to better ensure that officials adhere to the highest ethical standards. We have also instituted an innovative approach to reviewing ethical behavior by assigning retired judges (titled Judge Trial Referees) to decide whether probable cause exists in cases involving unethical conduct.

New Guidelines for Teen Drivers

Protecting our newest drivers continues to be a priority for the General Assembly and that has prompted some new guidelines for teen drivers. Last session, legislation was passed to prohibit 16- and 17-year-old drivers from driving between midnight and 5:00 a.m., unless they are going to or from work or school, or for religious or medical reasons.

Smart Planning for Growth

"Smart Growth" is a term that has become popular in describing certain ways to develop and use land. One way to accomplish smart growth is to draft consistent, effective and useful plans of conservation and development that coordinate local, regional and state growth. We passed legislation requiring the state Plan of Conservation and Development to identify areas suitable for mixed-use development. This also necessitates consistency among the state, regional and local plans and the establishment of a process for the state Office of Policy and Management to designate priority-funding areas ripe for development.

Supporting Stem Cell Research

New cutting-edge research involving the use of embryonic stem cells has the potential to discover treatments and cures for debilitating diseases like diabetes, Parkinson's disease, certain cancers and multiple sclerosis. Last session, the legislature took action to place strict limits on stem cell research conducted in our state—and to ban human cloning—while sending the message that Connecticut supports research that is conducted ethically and professionally. Moreover, we will invest \$100 million over 10 years in this research in an attempt to attract research scientists to our state. This legislation and commitment will save lives and bring new, high-paying jobs to our state.



CONTINUING TO WORK FOR CONNECTICUT'S FUTURE



Insurance Coverage for Infertility Treatments

A child can bring so much joy to the world. Unfortunately, for tens of thousands of people in Connecticut with fertility problems, having a child of their own has been an unreachable goal. Infertility is often treatable, but is often not covered by health insurance plans. Last session, the legislature voted to require Connecticut-regulated insurance companies to pay for certain fertility treatments. Further specific information can be obtained from your insurance company.

Promoting Farmland, Preserving Our Community

Connecticut has a long history of protecting and preserving its farmland and unique communities. This year we passed legislation establishing a matching grant program to help towns promote and sustain agricultural activity. People interested in starting or expanding an agricultural business can use a newly created database to find the land or equipment they need. Also, the bill establishes a fund to help promote historic preservation, open space and agriculture.

Tax Incentives for Driving Clean & Green

Alternative fuel or hybrid vehicles provide increased fuel efficiency and also emit lower emissions. We passed legislation last session that could result in greater incentives for consumers to purchase fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly automobiles. The commissioner of the state Department of Environmental Protection, representatives from the federal EPA and others will develop a plan to shrink the sales tax on these cars.



Energy Independence

Rising energy prices across the nation affect our everyday lives in so many ways. Our increased electricity costs are primarily due to congestion on the system and too few generation plants in our state. We passed legislation this session establishing several initiatives to reduce these costs. These incentives include providing operating cost subsidies and long-term financing for certain customers if they install distributed generation facilities (which are run off the electric grid) such as fuel cells or micro-turbines. This bill, along with necessary conservation efforts, can make a big difference in our energy outlook.